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Committee Parks, Forests and Utilities
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Recreation Strategy

1. Purpose

To request the Committee's approval to proceed with preparing Terms of Reference and subsequent Recreation Strategy for regional parks and forests.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2002*.

3. Background

Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) has a long history of managing recreation assets - specifically parks, forests and waterways. Many people use these places for recreational purposes. However, there is no Recreation Strategy that guides decision making around the management of these assets for recreational purposes.

During the August 2007 Landcare Committee meeting officers informally raised the idea of a Recreation Strategy to help guide the review of the *Regional Parks Network Management Plan*, which is due to commence in 2008/9. Council agreed that officers should prepare an issues paper to present to the Committee.

Since that time we have investigated the concept of a Recreation Strategy, its potential scope and its associated issues. We have also identified a proposed approach, process, project outcomes and a timeline.

4. Comment

4.1 Why should GWRC have a Recreation Strategy?

The first *Regional Parks Network Management Plan* (RPNMP) was signed off by Council in 2003 and is due for review in 2008/9.

Since 2003 GWRC has been working more closely with territorial authorities, district health boards and other regional agencies, with a focus on achieving sustainability through a range of community outcomes. Along the way it has taken a leading role in developing several key regional strategies:

- Our *Long Term Council Community Plan 2006-2016* articulates the aspirations of the Greater Wellington Region and provides leadership regarding some core values of sustainability, biodiversity and community engagement.
- The *Wellington Regional Strategy* focuses on economic development and describes the development of the region through leadership, economic initiatives, and a clearly planned regional form.
- The regional physical activity strategy *At the Heart* identifies and highlights the benefits of considering policies, environment, programmes, promotion and monitoring as positive interventions to achieve active communities.

There is national recognition of the need to value outdoor recreation, with SPARC and the Department of Conservation leading the development of a National Statement on Outdoor Recreation.

It is in this context that GWRC Parks wishes to develop a Recreation Strategy. A strategic framework for the facilitation of recreation in our parks and forests will enable us to clearly plan, develop and manage these resources, and provide underpinning principles for marketing and other activities. The Recreation Strategy will also be an integral part of the Council's decision making processes when considering the future use and development of the parks network and any additional parks. Lastly, it will also guide the review of the *Regional Parks Network Management Plan*, which in turn sets the direction for managing our existing network of regional parks.

In recent discussions we have identified other issues to be considered when developing the Recreation Strategy:

- There may be legislative issues to be resolved (particularly related to the Reserves Act) when implementing the Recreation Strategy.
- Recreation and its contribution to well-being are not well understood.
- There is little clarity about the potential role of GWRC in facilitating recreation.
- The need to involve Councillors, staff and other key stakeholders in the process.

4.2 Proposed approach

We propose to work in three projects:

- Consult with staff and key stakeholders in the development of a Terms of Reference for sign off by Council, including agreement about the scope and content of a Recreation Strategy.

- Prepare and facilitate two workshops – one for Councillors and the second for staff and key stakeholders - to shape the framework for the Recreation Strategy.
- Prepare the Recreation Strategy for presentation to and approval by Council.

4.3 Process

The process for developing the recreation strategy will involve:

- Greater Wellington Regional Councillors
- Park rangers, planners and other Parks' staff
- Open space providers
- Environmental managers
- Programme and marketing personnel.

4.4 Project outcomes

The outcomes of this process will be:

- The Recreation Strategy will link with the *LTCCP*, *Wellington Regional Strategy* and *At the Heart*. It will also consider relevant national and territorial authority recreation strategies.
- Council and staff will have a clear understanding of the role of GWRC in the delivery of recreation.
- This understanding will guide the subsequent review of parks network plans and the development of park management plans.
- The strategy will be innovative but simple.
- New connections will be created between people, strategies and processes.

4.5 Project timeline

A draft timeline is attached as attachment 1. The Strategy is expected to be complete by June 2008.

4.6 Costs

No additional funding will be required. The cost of developing the strategy, approximately \$35,000, will be contained within the Marketing and Design, and Parks Department budgets.

5. Communication

Developing a clear understanding amongst staff and stakeholders will be essential to the development and acceptance of the Recreation Strategy. Communications will be developed with this in mind.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*
3. *Approves the preparation of the Terms of Reference and Recreation Strategy.*

Report prepared by:

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Attachment 1: Project Plan